

Study on Women and Political Participation Trends, Linkages and Challenges

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Abstract – Political representation of women is seen as an important factor in all aspects of progress; however India's policies on gender equality continue to be scrutinized. After independence in 1947, a number of measures were undertaken to strengthen women's political presence in the numerous local government structures in India through decentralizing authority. The Panchayati Raj Institutions has enhanced the involvement in decision-making role in policy institutions by disadvantaged sectors of society, including women. Therefore, by the application of quality approaches, such as paper analyses of the amendment act of the Panchayati Raj institutions and expert interviews with electing woman members of a single Keralan district, this research seeks to examine women's political leadership within the local government institutions. This paper aims to recognize the problems facing women in roles of political leadership in India, the largest democratic country. Study findings show that significant progress is being made in the role of leadership on women's empowerment but that there are still some key barriers to women being involved in the policy sphere.

Keywords – Women and Political Participation, Trends, Linkages, Challenges, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The most critical part of the human planet is politics. Politics has a long tradition, dating back to the dawn of human understanding and creation. When men first began to form groups, they each had their own President or Mukhia, whose judgment was final. The complexity of culture increased as the human mind grew. The "Mukhia" or "Sardar" no longer had the ability to administer the society effectively. As a result, the complexities were often shown in politics. Politics is a fascinating topic. Not only should men take an active role in governance, but women are still really interested in politics. In terms of the position of women in politics, it has taken on numerous forms across history. Women's political inclusion is viewed as a critical component of all aspects of development; nevertheless, India's gender equality policies continue to be scrutinized. Following the independence of India in 1947, attempts were undertaken to increase female political involvement in different local self-government structures of the country through decentralizing power. The Panchayati Raj Institutions also expanded involvement in political decision-making of disadvantaged social classes, including women. Gender balance is a pillar of modern democratic government. Political involvement Men and women alike should have equitable rights and opportunities, in line with international standards, to participate

fairly in all aspects and stages of democratic processes. Despite the fact that women have made significant progress in gaining the freedom to vote and the ability to run for political office in certain nations, they only make up fewer than a quarter of Members of Parliament.

Gender inequality persists, notably in the political sphere, despite numerous legislative enactments and commissions created to promote gender equality. Women's political engagement is one of the most important aspects of women's liberation. In addition to its social, political and economic role, women's inclusion in decision-making systems further supports the society by more equitable and practical decision-making processes. Despite progress, women are now unwilling to engage in politics owing to geographical, socioeconomic, ideological, and psychological barriers. Women's fair representation is needed for strong democratic governance, and their commitment to these mechanisms must be assessed in the proper way. Women's voices and concerns, which account for half of the country's people, cannot be dismissed or marginalized in a true democracy. As a result, this paper examines the obstacles and problems that women face when it comes to engaging in national and local government.

Women Voters

In India, female electorates have risen by a lamentable 2.7% from 45% in 1951 to 47.6% in 2014. The overall number of voters has been increasing year after year, but the proportion of men and women voting has stayed almost stagnant, with men accounting for more than 52% of the electorate. This suggests that in 2014, there are 38,740,183 more males in the vote than there are women. When we consider the real number of votes cast by women, the disparity becomes much more pronounced. This is less than the number of eligible woman voters, according to the pattern over the last few years. In 2009, 47.7% of eligible woman voters voted, accounting for 45.8% of all votes cast. Furthermore, according to election figures from 2014, just 41.4 percent of new woman electorate are between the ages of 18 and 19.

Women's political status can be described as women's degree of independence and liberty in shaping and exchanging power and the importance provided to that position by society. In reality, in the Indian constitution, it is a radical departing not just from conventional Indian norms but also from the democratic standards of the most advanced countries of the past that women are recognized as equally political in the Indian constitution. An study of the involvement of women in the Indian general elections reveals an ever-increasing urge for women to practice their franchise and a shrinking gap in the participation of male and female voters. In the other hand, though, an overview of the success of women as voters reveals a rather poor candidacy and a low percentage of female candidates winner. This is since no political party in India has yet adopted an approach that allows women to be nominated for a considerable number of political candidates.

Defining Political Participation

There are attempts have been made to define but there is no single definition of political participation. Participation is usually considered as "taking part" contend that participation takes place when an individual contributes to something. They might take a variety of forms: direct (by one's conduct) or indirect (by representing others); formal (informal) or informal (informal) debates (done with team). And, in plain language, political engagement is participation in politics. The process of political action and engagement is seen as politics. Political activity is directly or indirectly linked to policy-making and decision-making. Political involvement thus implies simply people's participation in policy and decision-making. People take part in a variety of events. As a result, some people are very engaged, make politics their careers and represent the public sector. Others can join lobbyists and push their specific requirements. Some others, by contrast, may seem to refuse to vote, even to withdraw from politics. Researchers like as Sydney say 'political participation

refers to the voluntary actions through which individuals of society participate in selecting rulers and in the creation and influence of the public directly and indirectly.' Political engagement is seen as an activity to influence the selection and behaviour of government officials. Similarly, political involvement is defined as the action of private people to affect public decision-making. In larger terms, he defined 'political involvement in the involvement of the person, from non-engagement to political office, at different levels of action in the political system.' All the aforementioned concepts are aimed at defining political involvement as an act or at influencing decision-making.

Participation as Good

Mark Bevier has identified five explanations for the value of participation. First, liberals like John Locke, Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, Judith Shklar viewed that participation may be a protective mechanism against the real abuses carried out by the government or other citizens. The liberal model sees political participation from an economic point of view that understands politics in terms of markets, protecting property and maximizing social welfare. Second, there are civic humanists like Leonard Bruni, who viewed political life as a setting for realization of human virtues and as a practice that would bring glory to both humans and the city. In consistent with this view, says what makes political participation unique is that it occurs in a context of equality and non-domination. Further, she stated that the political space would offer and opportunities for self disclosure as well as the chance to have interaction in history making. Third, political participation is validated in terms of an ideal of autonomy. The validation of participation in terms of autonomy is found in Rousseau's participatory democracy, deliberative democracy of Jurgen Habermas and pragmatic tradition introduces by John Dewey. This view regards people's capacity to formulate laws under which it lives. On this account political participation enables citizens to direct and refashion the norms and conditions for public life. Therefore, it associates participation to freedom in the sense that people can control the destiny of polity, unfettered social forces, and other contingencies. Fourth, political participation is considered as good because it serves the purpose of developmental function for citizens who engage in it. Through participation people develop intellectually, morally, and therapeutically.

Why Participation Matters?

Sidney Verba examines the importance of participation. He contends participation deserves a special place for reasons that should be explicated. Verba sees participation represents a general value in our society. Participation is for an individual to have some autonomy and control

over their own fate. Secondly, participation is assumed of as a way to some other end. For instance, people vote to choose political leaders to our likings, write a letter to a person in public office to induce him to act in some way we prefer. Thirdly, widespread participation in the decision making process increases the likelihood that decisions will be effectively carried out. It is because of the fact that participation gives decision-makers two vital resources: information and support. Verba pointed out that if an individual or group does not participate or does not try to influence the government, the decision makers end up in making a plan in ignorance. Similarly, participation is assumed to provide support for decisions: those who take part in the decision are more likely to support those decisions. Lastly, the reason why participation is important is associated with social goals. The more the government does in respect to better the life of citizens, the higher the likelihood of political participation. In recent years, governments are actively involved in providing better life and opportunities to a larger number of people, like in terms of bettering their income, preserving their health and educating their children. The variety of types of activities entered into by the government means that a number of specific groups will find the stakes of political participation particularly high in relation to particular programs.

Typology of Political Participation

Studies on political participation were equated with electoral participation. Later on, the scope of participation widened to include other kinds of activities in addition to electoral ones. Therefore, kinds of participation vary to the extent that it encompasses passivity to active participation. In a representative democracy, the electoral system assumes greater importance. It is through an electoral process that individuals choose their representatives who act on their behalf. Through their elected representatives that citizens indirectly take part in the process of policy-making. An individual can take part in the electoral process in a number of ways - as a voter, as candidate, campaigners, getting involved in the nomination of candidates, attending political meetings, etc. Such participation is considered greater importance in a democratic political system. Through the electoral process, public opinion gets reflected in the political process. It is also considered important in terms of an individual's political consciousness. A higher level of participation may lead to a higher degree of political consciousness and vice versa. The studies conducted by scholars revealed that the individual participation in electoral process depends on number of socio-economic and political factors such as education, caste, age, sex economic status, electoral system, political culture and so on. Apart from electoral participation, there are other activities which later assume as a part of political participation. A number of political scientists have attempted to identify and classify different types of political

participation. while identifying forms of participation arrange them in the hierarchical order on the basis of the degree or extent of participation. They have arranged activities in descending order: (i) holding political or administrative office, (ii) seeking political or administrative office, (iii) active membership in a political organization, (iv) passive membership in political organization, (v) active membership of a quasi-political organization such as interest group and pressure group, (vi) passive membership of a quasi-political organization, (vii) participation in public meeting and demonstrations, (viii) participation in informal political discussion, (ix) general interest in politics, (x) voting, and (xi) political apathy . They have placed voting in lowest in political activity rank and justified that election is occasional and does not remain operative all the time and requires minimum involvement and labor on the part of the individual. While explaining the extent of political participation Rush and Although added apathy and said that it varies from system to system but remains important factor in examination of political participation.

Democracy, Gender and Representation

Democracy is a widely disputed notion and thus the define of democracy is one of political scientists' most difficult methodological problems. However, most academics have chosen a procedural definition based on their insights Procedural concepts of democracy can be traced to the influence in which democracy is defined as an institutional arrangement in order that individuals can take the political decision-making authority through a competitive struggle for people's voters, in the seminal work, capitalism, socialism and democracy by Schumpeter. In constructing his theory of democracy Schumpeter followed the method of creating a model of what he called the 'classical doctrine' of democracy. Later on, democracy is defined in a political system, where the 'most powerful collective decision-makers are picked through fair, honest and regular elections, in which candidates compete in free voting and in which almost all adults are entitled to vote.' This process was developed. The list of qualities characterizing democracy and these are a list of 'institutional arrangements,' focusing on the election process, followed by Schumpeter's arguments that democracy was a political way forward. Making a difference between democracy as an ideal system and a set of institutional arrangements that imperfectly approximates that ideal (a system which he calls polyarchy) Dahl provides an operational definition of polyarchy in terms of eight institutional requirements that need to be in Participation and Democratic Theory criticizes Schumpeter's claim that democracy is a method rather than an ideal and she argues that participation, both political and industrial, educates and empowers the participant and this is crucial to the robustness of democracy. Lipset (1959), however, describes the two major current alternative definitions of democracy as "minimalist"

and “maximalist”. The minimalist definition views democracy as a “political system of political rights that specifies how leadership should be designated at the highest national level in a policy”.

Women in Indian Politics

Despite the fact that women's political empowerment is seen as the foundation for all other advancements in every country, it faces numerous challenges, especially in developed countries such as India. Although females in industrialized countries have more opportunities and freedom to participate openly in political life, in the developing world, profoundly embedded cultural, moral, and social views regarding the role of women in society create many barriers for females to participate in decision-making in developing countries. As a result, analyzing women's role in a democratic environment requires more than their inclusion in the power hierarchy and political emancipation. It is critical to inspire females through a variety of initiatives and action plans at the state, global, and societal levels in order to increase their democratic participation.

The idea of women's political empowerment is particularly important. Empowerment is intended to assist women in achieving equality with men and at least significantly reducing gender inequality. Empowerment will permit women as responsible participants of the community in which they reside to play those social functions. Women's political position involves a degree of autonomy and independence to shape and to share authority, to make strategic choices for social meaning distribution. Equality is inseparable from constructive civic engagement in society's decision-making. Women's electoral participation is an integral factor in women's development, on the one hand, and society's growth on the other. It is a bad thing that some part of the population is left politically unprotected.

Political Participation of Women in Assam

As in other areas of India, women's political engagement in Assam started on a modest scale since the independence movement. Nevertheless, Assam's history and literature show the relative liberty of Assamese women within society, but in the first century of the British era the invasion of Burmases, the influence of Brahmanism, and the entrance into Bangladesh's culture forced Assami women to restrict themselves to four walls within the household. They couldn't labour for a wider civilization, a nation or even their own state. Their job was limited to their spouses and descendants' wellbeing. The ladies who governed a kingdom at once were a storey of past years, participated in politics and shown their courage in the war. Mahatma Gandhi visited Assam in 1921 and gave talks around the region. In a special meeting for them Gandhi called on women to participate fully in the

programmes of the independence fight, he also met Assamese women. The visit of Gandhi to Assam enthused the Assamese women and participated in the Freedom Movement. They had thrown out the purdah system and stood with the male in the same line. Participation in the picketing, public rally and public meetings etc. by the women of Assam at the time of Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1921), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930) and in the Quit India Movement (1942) became a common phenomenon. The participation of women of Assam in the Civil Disobedience Movement was so massive that prominent Assamese historian Benudhar Sarma described it as the women's movement. Women leaders like Chandra prabha Saikia, Amalprabha Das, Pushpalata Das, etc. had played dynamic role in the freedom movement. Fifteen women of Assam laid their lives in the freedom movement to the cause of India's freedom the participation of women of Assam in the freedom movement generated a sense of optimism among them and they began to organize themselves and established different women organizations. The first women's organization of Assam the 'Asom Mahila Samity' (later Asom Pradesik Mahila Samity) was formed in 1926 by Chandra Prabha saikiani. This organization had played an active role in extending women's education, adult women education, mother and child welfare, setting up of Khadi and village industries, in restricting child marriages and in prohibiting the untouchability etc. In 1940 the women wing of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee was formed. This wing had played a special role in the organization and training of the women. In 1941 the 'All Assam Girls Student conference' (Sadou Asom Satri Sanmilon) was constituted.

Challenges to Women's Participation in Elections

While the Indian Constitution ensures compulsory suffrage and equitable representation of women and males, existing social rights, domain identification private-public divide and male domination in political institutions hinder women's equal voting rights. Women's questions are not reflected in public policies and programmes owing to the lack of key policy-making positions of the important and high-quality presence of women. Indian men and women serving as members of the citizens have a very different public vision and also have very different goals for public service. The topics that were urgently needed for men to address, for example airports, community and trade centers, pipelines and bridges, were addressed by political officials and people, and long term concerns were discussed, including education, health, exploitation of women and basic population services (National Advanced Resources Institute, 2002-03). If a large number of women in the Indian parliament had been present, the Bill for a 33% reservation for women in the

state legislatures and parliament may have played a leading role in bringing about this. The absence of a critical mass of women also restricts their negotiating and negotiating power in relation to major cabinet posts in India, such as company, home affairs, safety and health, which are assigned to men and are considered heavyweight ministries. Indian women sometimes are appointed in the course of the cabinet formation to ministries known as "feminine" portfolios, such as women and children, information and culture, and social welfare, which are considered to be less important and less opportunities and reach among citizens. As a consequence, women in democratic affairs in India are relegated to the outskirts of power sharing on the apex, affecting their overall political status in India and becoming an obstacle to increased electoral participation.

POLITICAL FACTORS THAT AFFECTS WOMEN PARTICIPATION:

1. **Masculine Model of Politics:** Historically, political life has been structured around male traditions and beliefs, as well as male lifestyles in certain instances. For example, rather than shared cooperation, partnership, and community building, the political paradigm is focused on the concept of "winners and losers," rivalry, and conflict. Many women are alien to this world. The fact that this male paradigm exists means that either women oppose politics entirely or reject politics in the manner of men. Therefore, in limited quantities, when women are involved in politics.
2. **Lack of Party Support:** Women have significant roles in lobbying and mobilizing their groups, although in these systems they never have decision-making positions. While political parties have funding for campaigning, women may not take use of these resources. The method of identification and appointment of women is often partial in that "men's traits" are stressed and are also the criterion for the choice of applicants. "To make a woman think of going political is really complicated. She has to brace husband, children, and her family until she makes up her own mind.
3. **Lack of collaboration with women's organizations:** There is a lack of coordination with women's organizations whilst regimes should declare their commitment to political change. However, states alone should not expect to safeguard the equal role of women in all facets of society. The advancement of women's representation may play a function for civil society in general, including non-governmental organizations and women's organizations. It is important to ensure that

the equality engagement is embodied in legislation and national policy to reach gender equilibrium in political life. Affirmative action is the required instrument for maintaining at least 50% of women in decision-making at all stages.

4. **Lack of well-developed Education and Training Systems:** The number of women who are qualified for political careers must also be increased. This may be achieved by providing women an early stage entry, such as unique preparation in local or local government organizations, to job habits that are beneficial to political leadership. For the process of educating women in politics, a common understanding of women's issues, gender-based politics, lobbying skills and networking are relevant. Gender sensitization preparation would also provide a dish for gender balance in politics for both genders.
5. **Democratic Systems:** The form of electoral method used by a nation has a significant impact on women's political participation, especially in developing countries. Gender inequality in the voting sphere keeps women out of politics. Most claim that proportional representative schemes are more tailored to increasing women's representation than plurality systems.

The Perception of Politics as "Dirty"

It is unfortunate that people believe that politics is a dirty game. Politics is a difficult and risky game, but it doesn't have to be dirty. Politics is seen as "dirty" by women in several nations. As a consequence, women have been rocked by their confidence in their ability to contest political processes. Corruption, fraud, and blackmail generate a negative view of politics and exclude women from participating in politics. In reality, such a viewpoint is widely held around the world. While public perceptions of corruption are not necessarily accurate reflections of reality, they do have an effect on women's attitudes toward political careers. Women's presence in public bodies seems to be stronger in countries with a low or moderate level of corruption. with women making up 30 to 43.4 percent of parliamentarians in these nations.

Women and Politics of Nationalism

Women started to politics in reaction to the men's demand for engagement during the swadeshi movements of 1905-18. Mrs. Ramsay MacDonald, who was on her husband's India visit, Mrs. Besant's entrance in Indian politics has speeded up women's engagement in politics. In 1914 Mrs.

Annie Besant, a popular pioneer of the theosophical community, and renowned for her social and pedagogical efforts, became a member of the national movement. In September 1915, she created the Home Rule League in order to achieve Home Rule for India. Women started to wake up to alienation from national movement during the Home Rule between 1914 and 1917. Mrs Besant has been very powerful in her contribution to women's empowerment. She said that India's success relied on the empowerment of women. Formed in 1917, she was the first president of the Indian Woman's Association to make demands for women elected representatives. Her internment in June 1917 gave women in different sections of the world a national consciousness.

Panchayati Raj and Women

Women's participation was another subject of high concern in India at Panchayati Raj. Participation in the local Government was seen as important in fostering local female awareness and growth and preparing women for broader policy, especially at the grassroots level and working in rural women. The participation of women, conscience and effects became key concerns in the 1960's, when several states adopted laws to represent women in panchayats. It is claimed that representation of women by co-opting and appointing them in the elected bodies will contribute to women becoming more active in municipal governance, and hence to the advancement of women by emancipation. About the fact that the experiment was not entirely effective, the Gram Panchayats and Mahila Mandals were doing their job modernly and served as training grounds due to the limited numbers of women (two of the total's representatives are around ten) and a group because they had no political conscience. The portrayal of women was one of the main characteristics and ended in almost complete disappointment. In consequence, several states have abandoned appointment or collaboration, using reservations as the sole method to ensure that women in the Panchayati Raj are included.

CONCLUSION

In this era of the national administrative competence and modernizing the management structure, promoting their political involvement is an essential activity. This paper has studied the Women and Political Participation Trends, Linkages and Challenges and found that they are inadequate as regards the amount of women involved, their lack of enthusiasm, their self-interest and their low level of organizations. This is due both to informal and structured structural shortcomings and limitations. The informal structures contain limitations on conventional conceptions of gender, the narrow political wishes of women and their poor organizational sentiment. Formal structures need improvement of related policies, such as the

proportion of women in a village council, and the existing women's organizations in rural back areas are very small. Therefore, from the viewpoints of these two organizations, the extension of the electoral representation of rural women is to be attempted. Even after working with party events for several years, the patriarchy and gender inequality of higher political powers is an essential catalyst to hinder women from complying in politics. The broader question of the linkages between women's concerns and the general problems of society and the political structure is closely linked to this, and in turn influence. Is it not the widespread character of today's socio-economic society and political problems that affect women's right, liberty, fairness, and social status? Will the issue of women be followed? Whatever the trends in the wider domain and at times the contrary? Can solitude and distance guarantee women's problems, survival resilience and the pursuit of their objectives? In the past, this was unlikely during the freedom struggle.

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